

Parents



Are



Forever



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Dear Parent:



A dissolution decree cannot and does not end your responsibility as a parent. *Parents are forever.* Both parents should make every attempt to play a vital part in the lives of their children. Children need the ongoing affection, interest and concern of their parents. A child must feel that he has two parents who love him, even though they could not live happily with each other.

It is the hope of our Court that the information in this pamphlet will assist you in helping your children cope with your marriage dissolution with a minimum of hurt. The practical guidelines which follow are based on the many years of experience of both the Court and the counseling profession.

If you are like most people, you probably have had feelings of isolation, despair, depression, loneliness, grief, guilt, a feeling of having failed and a loss of self-confidence. You have worried about many things, such as finances, a new social life, employment, fulfillment of sexual needs and the welfare of the children. You can use this present time of difficulty as an opportunity for growth.

The way you cope with your dissolution will in large part determine how your children cope with it. You are at a crossroads and can choose from alternative routes.

One road leads to self-pity, living in the past, nurturing bitterness and turning the children against your former marriage partner. This is a dead-end road which spells trouble for you and your children.

The other road, and the constructive one, leads to becoming involved in experiences that provide opportunities for you to again feel "success," to get to know yourself better, restore your self-confidence, reach out for goals that will make your life productive, satisfying and meaningful.

GUIDELINES FOR PARENTS

1. Allow yourself and your children time for readjustment. Convalescence from an emotional operation such as dissolution is essential.
2. Remember the best parts of your marriage. Share them with your children and use them constructively.



3. Assure your children that they are not to blame for the breakup, and that they are not being rejected or abandoned. Children, especially the young ones, often mistakenly feel they have done something wrong and believe that the problems in the family are the result of

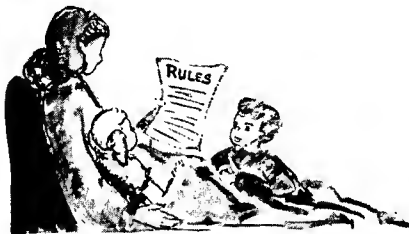
their own misdeeds. Small children may feel that some action or secret wish of theirs has caused the trouble between their parents.



4. Continuing anger or bitterness toward your former partner can injure your children far more than the dissolution itself. The feelings you show are more important than the words you use.
5. Refrain from voicing criticism of the other parent. It is difficult but absolutely necessary. For a child's healthy development, it is important for him to respect both parents.
6. Do not force or encourage your child to take sides. To do so encourages frustration, guilt and resentment.
7. Try not to upset a child's routine too abruptly. Children need a sense of continuity and it is disturbing to them if they must cope with too many changes all at once.
8. Dissolution of a marriage often leads to financial pressures on both parents. When there is a financial crisis, the parents' first impulse may be to keep the children from realizing it. Often,

they would rather make sacrifices themselves than ask the child to do so. The atmosphere is healthier when there is frankness and when children are expected to help.

9. Marriage breakdown is always hard on the children. They may not always show their distress or realize at first what this will mean to them. Parents should be direct and simple in telling children what is happening and why, and in a way a child can understand and digest. This will vary with the circumstances and with each child's age and comprehension. The worst course is to try to hush things up and make a child feel he must not talk or even think about what he senses is going on. Unpleasant happenings need explanation, which should be brief, prompt, direct and honest.

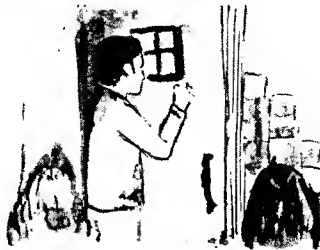


10. The story of your marriage dissolution may have to be retold after the child gets older and considers life more maturely. Though it would be unfortunate to present dissolution as a tragedy and either party as a martyr, it would be a pity also to pretend there are no regrets and that dissolution is so common it hardly matters.

11. The guilt parents may feel about the marriage breakdown may interfere in their disciplining the children. A child needs consistent control and direction. Over-permissiveness, or indecisive parents who leave a child at the mercy of every passing whim and impulse, interfere with a child's healthy development. Children need and want to know quite clearly what is expected of them. Children feel more secure when limits are set. They are confused when grown-ups seem to permit behavior which they themselves know to be wrong and are trying to outgrow. Children need leadership and sometimes authority. Parents must be ready to say "NO" when necessary.

VISITATION GUIDELINES

The behavior of parents has a great influence on the emotional adjustment of their children. This is equally true after the dissolution of a marriage. The following visitation guidelines have been found to be helpful in achieving meaningful visitation:



1. Visitation should be pleasant not only for the children, but for both parents. Visitation should help your children maintain a positive relationship with their visiting parent.
2. The visits should not take place only in the children's home. The visiting parent may wish the children to visit in his or her home overnight, or may want to plan an enjoyable outing.

3. The question is often asked, "Should the father take the children to the girl friend's house?" and sometimes the same question is asked about the mother. Visitation is a time for the parent and the children to be with each other; to enjoy each other; to maintain positive relationships. Having other people participate may dilute the parent-child experience during visitation. Also, it may appear to the children that the parent does not have time for them, and that he does not care enough to give them his undivided attention during visitation.
4. Keep your visitation schedule and inform the other parent when you cannot keep an appointment. Not keeping a visit without notifying the other parent may be construed by the child as rejection.
5. You may need to adjust the visitation schedule from time to time according to your children's age, health and interests.



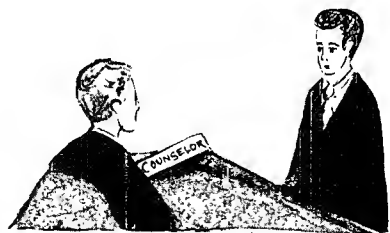
6. Frequently a father asks, "Why should I visit?" He is hurt, as his comments reveal; "I'm no longer needed; the wife has our home and my children." The visit is one of the few times that the

father has personal contact with the children and for that reason should be a meaningful one for both the father and the children. Even though the parents have not been able to get along, the children still need both parents if they are to grow up in a normal way.

7. Often a father questions where he will take the children on the visits and what he should plan in the way of amusement for them, particularly if they are young children. Activities may add to the pleasure of a visit, but most important of all is the father's involvement with the children. A giving of himself is more important than whatever material things he may give them.
8. The visit should not be used to check on the other parent. The children should not be pumped for this kind of information. They should not be used as little spies. Often in the child's perception the parents hate each other, and he will feel uncomfortable at the time of visit. In his mind if he does anything to please the visiting parent, he may invite outright rejection by his other parent. He has already lost one parent in his mind, and is fearful of losing the other. For this reason parents should show mutual respect for each other.
9. The child may be left with many problems following visits, and both parents should make every effort to discuss them and to agree on ways to deal with them.
10. Both parents should strive for agreement in decisions pertaining to the children, especially discipline, so that one parent is not undermining the other parent's efforts.

IF YOU NEED HELP

If you decide that dissolution of the marriage is the only answer to your marital differences and that help to restore the marriage is no longer what you want or need, you may still need professional help to get on the right road. Help is available. Seek your attorney's assistance in locating the proper professional help for your particular problem.



It is unfortunate that many people believe that to ask for help is a sign of weakness, for in reality it is a sign of strength. It takes a great deal of courage for a human being to say, "I have a problem which I can't solve alone and I need help with it."

Asking for help does not mean that a person is incapable of solving his problems, for in the final analysis it is the person himself who solves his problems. The counselor's function is to guide a person and give some direction to his search for solutions. There is hardly a person who has not needed help at some time in his life. Those who reach for professional help in times of crisis have a better chance to find effective and permanent solutions in a shorter time.

Persons with problems often become discouraged which only emphasizes weaknesses. They often overlook strengths still present, as well as other alternatives for coping with these problems. A trained counselor will assist in achieving a better understanding of strengths or weaknesses.

Advice from well-meaning friends and relatives, in many cases, further aggravates the situation. Friends or relatives usually are not professionally trained to treat problems and they can seldom be objective.

Professional counseling will create an awareness which can assist you in dealing with your and your children's problems at this time.



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